

RLI event report

Event organisers: [REDACTED], [REDACTED], [REDACTED], [REDACTED], [REDACTED] - doctoral researchers in the School of Education and Social Work

Title of event: Be/coming Academic: A one day symposium exploring doctoral and early career researcher's emotional journeys into academia

Participants: We hosted 50 doctoral and early career researchers from across institutions. Approximately half of these came from Sussex.

Summary: The intention of this one-day symposium was to create a space for doctoral and early career researchers from across disciplines to explore the ways our emotions shape our academic identities. We wanted to probe the implications of our (varied) emotional responses to academia upon how we both understand and contribute to knowledge production. Through the event, we unpacked different notions of what it means to both 'be' and 'become' academic, opening the space for innovative ideas around what an academic identity and academic engagement can mean in today's world.

We received a number of abstracts responding to this theme, which we then assessed and categorised according to different themes – ranging from topics pertaining to performance and the juggling of multiple roles in academia, to discussions on the influence of race, class, age, disability and gender upon the development of academic identities. In addition, we held a workshop on 'writing' and academic identities as well as an interactive workshop on the student-supervisor relationship. Our contributions ranged from the more traditional scholarly presentations, to Pecha Kucha presentations as well as poetic and artistic responses. In addition, we developed a blog which we used to engage with participants prior to our event.

Summary of feedback:

Overall, we had a very positive response and feedback – with people wanting to continue the conversation we had started. However, it was difficult to know what to do with all interesting conversations we had, other than request that we keep them going among ourselves/over virtual communities. It would have been good if we had included a more pro-active session to close the day, whereby we consider where some of our discussions could lead into productive avenues to work towards building more supportive and inclusive environments for researchers.

Final expenditure: We spent the entire £1000 received from the RLI fund, in addition to an extra £150 granted to us by our department (ESW). The majority of funds was spent on catering, followed by transport and accommodation for our keynote speaker and some minor expenses on stationary.

Lesson's learnt:

- If possible, pursue external caterers given the high costs of internal ones.

- Distribute and delegate tasks from early on in the organization of the event, utilising different organizers strengths and skillsets.
- Keep minutes for each meeting and circulate in order to ensure that everyone is on the same page and is able to follow up on tasks.
- For future events, consider making a (minor) fee request for Eventbrite registration in order to prevent people registering and not attending event.